

## Food Safety

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated 76 million cases of foodborne illness occur each year in the United States.

Each year millions of people fall ill due to food poisoning, which occurs after consuming foods that are contaminated during preparation.

### Thawing Food Properly

When thawing food, outer sections warm up faster than inner sections, which can cause microorganisms to grow. That is why it is important to follow the correct thawing suggestions below, depending on your method, to prevent the growth of microorganisms:

- In the refrigerator – Thaw food at 41°F (5°C) or lower to keep harmful microorganisms from growing.
- Under running water – Thaw food at about 70°F (21°C) or lower.
- In the microwave – Only thaw food in the microwave if the food will be cooked immediately.
- During the cooking process – Some foods can be thawed while cooking, such as frozen hamburger patties on a grill.

### Preparing Food Safely

To ensure that you are safely preparing food, you should prevent cross-contamination—the transfer of microorganisms from one food or surface to another—and use proper time and temperature control. To avoid cross-contamination:

- Wash your hands using hot, soapy water before handling food and between touching different types of food.

- Use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw and already prepared/cooked foods.
- Clean all work surfaces and equipment after each task, especially when handling raw foods.
- To control time and temperature: The temperature danger zone is between 41°F and 135°F (5°C to 57°C), because microorganisms that cause foodborne illnesses grow and multiply in this range.

### Cooling and Reheating Food

When cooling food, time spent in the temperature danger zone must be minimized. When being reheated, food must reach the correct temperature in the right amount of time. To properly cool food:

- Divide large quantities of food into small shallow containers for quicker cooling.
- Refrigerate or freeze prepared food and leftovers within two hours.
- Place the food in an ice-water bath and stir frequently.
- Stir food to cool it faster and more evenly.
- Do not pack the refrigerator—cool air must circulate.
- To properly reheat food, it must reach an internal temperature of 165°F (74°C) for at least 15 seconds. If this temperature is not reached within two hours, the food should be discarded.